

The Gracious ANSWER of the most Illustrious Lady of Pleasure, the Countess of Castlemaine,
To the Poor-Whores Petition.

Right Trusty and Well-beloved Madam Cresswell and Damaris Page, with the rest of the suffering Sister-hood in Dog and Bitch Yard, Lukewarm Lane, Saffron Hill, Moor-fields, Ratcliff-Highway, &c. We greet you well, in giving you to understand our Noble Mind, by returning our Thanks, which you are worthy of, in rendering us our Titles of Honour, which are but our Due. For on Shrove-Tuesday last, Splendidly did we appear upon the Theatre at W. H. being to amazement wonderfully deck'd with Jewels and Diamonds, which the (abhorred and to-be-undone) Subjects of this Kingdom have payed for. We have been also Serene and Illustrious ever since the Day that Mars was so instrumental to restore our Goddess Venus to her Temple and Worship; where, by special Grant, we quickly became a Famous Lady: And as a Reward of our Devotion, soon created Right Honourable, the Countess of Castlemaine. And as a further addition to our Illustrious Serenity, according to the ancient Rules and laudable Customs of our Order, we have cum privilegio alwayes (without our Husband) satisfied our self with the Delights of Venus; and in our Husbands absence have had a Numerous Off-spring, (who are Bountifully and Nobly provided for.) Which Practice hath Episcopal Allowance also, according to the Principles of Seer Shelden, &c. If Women have not Children by their own Husbands, they are bound (to prevent their Damnation) to try by using the means with other men: Which wholesome and pleasing Doctrine did for some time hold me fast to his Religion. But since this Seer hath shewn more Cowardize, than Principles or Policy, in fearing to declare the Church of Rome to be the True, Ancient, Uniform, Universal, and most Holy Mother Church; Therefore we tell you (with all the Sisterhood) That we're now no longer of the Church of England, which is but like a Brazen-Balon tied to a Barbers-wooden Pole, (viz.) Protestant Doctrine and Order tied by Parliamentary Power to Roman Catholick Foundations, Constitutions, and Rights, &c. And are become a Convert to, and a professed Member of the Church of Rome; Where the worthy Fathers and Confessors, as Durandus, Gratianus, With multitudes of others, (who were not, neither are, of the Protestant, Puritanical, and Fanatical Conventicling Opinion) do declare, That Venereal Pleasures, accompanied with Looseness, Anchery, and Prophaneness, are not such abominous Crimes as crying Sins, but rather (as the old Woman of Loven said) they do mortise the Flesh. And the general Opinion of Holy Mother Church, is, That Venereal Pleasures, in the strictest sense, are but Venial Sins, which Confessors of the meanest Order can forgive. So that the Adoring of Venus, is by the Allowance of Great Authority, Desirable, Honourable, and Profitable.

But when we understood, in your Address, the Barbarity of those Rude Apprentices, and the cruel Sufferings that the Sisterhood was exposed unto; especially those which were in a hopeful way of Recovery, and others that were disabled from giving Accommodation to their Right Honourable Devotaries, with the danger which you convinced us our own Person was in, together with the remembrance of our two New Cotivals, with Little Miss: We were for many hours swallowed up with sorrow, and almost drownd in Tears, and could not at all be comforted, until the sweet sound of the Report came to our Ears, That the L. C. J. K. and his Brethren, with our Counsel learned in the Law, had Commission and Instruction given to frame a Bill of Indictment against those Trayterous and Rebellious Boys, and to select a Jury of Gentlemen that should shew them no favour: At which our Noble Spirit revived, and presently we consulted how we might express our Grace and Compassion towards you, and also reasonably provide for the future safety of your Practice; and exercise our Revenge upon those that so grossly abused you, and therein offered such an insufferable Affront to our Eminency, that we cannot bear without great Indignation.

Imprimis, We engage to contribute to your Losses, either out of the Annual Kents, which we have bigged, or out of the next Moneys which shall come to our hands by our own Practice, or as soon as our standing Revenue shall be established: For should we part with a hundred thousand pounds worth of our Jewels, since so much English Money hath cross'd the Narrow Seas, we fear that our Gold-souls will not be able to raise it upon them.

Item, For your Safety, we do enjure all French, Irish, and English Hatters, to be a Guard to the whole Sisterhood, and to take up their Quarters with them for their better security; and if they want Money for their subsistence, let them pay on Courage, and take it up on the High-ways; and if any of them should be taken in the Fact, we shall, upon our Honour, procure them pardons: Or else let them cheat and cozen, and they shall have Protection.

Item, For your Honour, doubt not of having what countenance

Authority of holy Mother Church can give you. And for the increase of our Practice, the Master of our Revels shall give License for the setting up as many Play-houses as his Holiness the Pope hath Holidays in his Kalendar, that the Civil Youth of the City may be Debauched and trained up in Looseness and Ignorance, whereby the Roman Religion may with ease be established in Court, Church, City, and Nation, the most effectual means for the accomplishment of our Designs.

Item, We have taken special care that our Sisterhood, and the whole Corporation, may be restored by Charter to all their former Liberties, Priviledges and Immunities whatsoever.

Item, That Sir —— Berkenhead and Sir —— Charlton, two worthy Patriots, together with Sr. W. M. lately become zealousy tender of our Honour, be appointed to bring in a Bill upon Wednesday next, for a full Toleration of all Bawdy-houses, Play-houses, Whore-houses, &c. that all the Adorers of Venus may come to their Worship without Molestation: And that this Proviso may be inserted, That all Preaching, Printing, Private Meetings, Conventicles, &c. may be forthwith suppressed; except those that are Connived at, as Members of Holy Mother Church.

Item, We have appointed the Right Reverend Seer of Canterbury, with other Reverend Seers, (viz.) the B. of Rochester, the B. of Gloucester, and Dean Hardy, the E. of Loutherdale, Mr. Brounkerd, and Bab May, or any three of them, to be a close Committee to consult the Grievances of the Sisterhood, and to remove all things that may hinder their happy Restauration with all Freedom, Safety, and Honour.

Item, That all Members of Parliament, of our Religion, during this Session, and no longer, may use their Priviledge, in sending for such of our Sisterhood to their Chambets, as they have a Mind to, upon their own terms; considering they have so Freely and Unanimously Voted Taxes, till their Own Revenues will not maintain them: That the Ingenuity and Gentility of the Sisterhood may appear to all the World, That we are better bred, than to slight those that have so Nobly provided for us.

Item, We charge that none of the Sisterhood take any more Cinctures or Cassocks to pawn, of any Churchmen either Romish or English, when they reel into their Quarters, because they turn not to Account.

Item, That if any Alderman will Eat Flesh in Lent, or deal in prohibited Commodities, Our pleasure is, That they pay and be paid soundly for it, least they build London again; contrary to the intent of those that burnt it: Only let Sir T. B. That would Piss out the Fire, and Lieut. Col. Ronswell with their Brethren, that took care, That the Fire should not be quenched, and also withstood the Common Council, in sending their Petition to the Parliament, (when such full and pregnant proof was made, that the City was burnt by the Good Roman Catholicks) have all the Courtesye Imaginable. But above all, We desire them to be kind to those, who have (to this day, out of their good affection to the Roman Interest) prevented by several Artifices, the putting of the aforesaid Petition into the Hands of Sir Thomas Allen, that Fanatick Zealot, who was appointed by the Court of Common-Council, to deliver it to the Parliament, who now (to our great Joy) will be Prorogued before they can do any thing in it. Neither let those Worthies be forgotten who (in despite of the Importunities of several busie Citizens) have till now hindered the preparing of a most necessary Additional Bill, for the Rebuilding of London: Which Work it is hoped will now cease, there being no time before the end of this Session, to carry that Bill through all the Formalities of Parliament.

Item, That the same Kindnes be shewed to all Officers, both Civil and Millicary, that came to the Relief of the Sisterhood in the time of their necessity. And let those Papists which are now drawing from all parts of England and Wales to this Place, be acquainted with the Habitations of the Sisterhood, and delight themselves together, and consult the weighty Affairs now in hand. But for our Adversaries, with the Rebellious Citizens, Let them look to it when the French are ready (who as yet drop in by small Parties, and lie incognito with the rest of the Catholicks) we shall deal with them, as we did with their Brethren in Ireland.

Item, To any other that here directed, give no Entertainment without Ready Money, lest you suffer Loss. For had we not been careful in that particular, we had neither gained Honour nor Rewards, which are now (as you know) both conferred upon Us.

Given at our Closet in King Street, W. H.

—, the 24th of April 1660.

C A S T L E M A I N E